Productivity for the Hopelessly Disorganized
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My Perspective
Session Outline

• Eliminating Distractions
• Taking Back Your Time
• Juggling Priorities
• Breaking the Procrastination Cycle
• Productivity Anti-Patterns
• Optimizing the Zone
Session Take-Aways

- Strategies and Tips
- Tools
- Perspective
Session Take-Aways

• Strategies and Tips
• Tools
• Perspective

Mix and Match
Distractions
Distractions

Yesterday a mythical place where stuff has to be ready according to info from tomorrow.

Are you doing anything?

Can you pull some data for me? Yeah I'm not in a hurry so tonight is fine by me.
Break My Concentration and I Break Your Kneecaps

by Ted Dziuba on Sunday, January 24, 2010

I own a good set of headphones that fully enclose my ears. I am not an audiophile, I just don’t like to hear other people talk at me. When I am staring at my Emacs windows with headphones on, it generally isn’t a physical cue that I am looking for conversation. In fact, when I am that deep into thinking out a problem and I get interrupted, I think about the anti-workplace-violence clause in the employee handbook, and how a poorly lit parking lot probably doesn’t qualify as “company property”.

Interrupting a thinking programmer is a sucker punch to productivity’s kidney. Of course it’s still important to keep open
Distractions

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productivity’s kidney. Of course it’s still important to keep open
if c == ":
    backtrack =

if c == ":
    backtrack = 1

...so if the current character is
...so if the current character is a comma, we set the backtracking flag...
commit #5763 to here caused bug here or did it just expose it?

CLI ENTRY POINT

NEW CONFIG FORMAT PARSER

REMOTE CONFIG LOADER

Sarah wrote this, maybe ask about weird parse logic?
commit #5763 to here caused bug here or did it just expose it?

CLI ENTRY POINT

NEW CONFIG FORMAT PARSER

REMOTE CONFIG LOADER

CALLBACK FOR CONFIG STATE

Sarah wrote this, maybe ask about weird parse logic?

no access to source - are we just re-calculating its state later?

HEY, SO I JUST SENT YOU AN EMAIL ABOUT THAT THING
Hey, so I just sent you an email about that thing.
if c == ":
    backtrack = 1
“Programmers Cannot work effectively in an interrupt-driven environment”

–Jeff Atwood
Control Your Productive Time
Recommended Tool
RescueTime
www.rescuetime.com
Notable Features

Set alerts to let you know when you spent a certain amount of time on an activity.

Log highlights about what you accomplished during the day.

Block distracting websites by choosing an amount of time to focus and RescueTime will block those websites.

How much time did you spend on email? In meetings? RescueTime gives you the answers.

Time measurement when you want it. Pause or quit at any time. You are in complete control.

RescueTime
When Are You Most Productive?

*My Actual usage Data from 2016*
When Are You Most Productive?

*My Actual usage Data from 2016*
When Are You Most Productive?

*My Actual usage Data from 2016*
Schedule Your Distractions
Feel Free to Waste my Mornings

*My Actual usage Data from 2016*
Spotlight on your top activities this year

Do Not Disturb

*My Actual usage Data from 2016

Do Not Disturb
Do Not Disturb

- IM in away mode (or closed)
- Notifications Turned Off
- Email Closed
- Headphones On
- Calendar Blocked Off
- Phone Off/Unplugged
Set Expectations

- Does your team know when they should contact you?
- Does your manager know you’re still a “team player”
- Can people get hold of you in emergencies
Recommended Tool
Inbox Pause
inboxpause.com
Taming Your Inbox
Recommended Tool

Throttle
throttlehq.com
Recommended Tool

PolyMail
polymail.io
Meetings!

Everybody’s Favorite
“If you have a meeting with 8 people in the room that lasts an hour, that’s a day of productivity that was lost”

– Joel Spolsky
Step Up (and get out)

- Could this be an email?
- Do I need to be here?
- Can I leave?
Why are you clicking accept?
Block Your Calendar

• It’s your time - Protect it!
Identify the Important Meetings

- Sprint Planning/Review
- Stand-ups
- Brainstorming
- Mass Communication
Get Creative with the Others
Recommended Tool

Code Collaborator
smartbear.com
Firefighting and "Reactive" Mode
Firefighting and “Reactive” Mode

• Pick your battles

• Try to rotate daytime Prod Support

• DO NOT Over-commit

• Consider using Points/Velocity for estimates
Juggling Priorities
Recommended Tool (sort-of)

Action Enforcer
actionenforcer.com/online/
Breaking the Procrastination Cycle

AKA Resistance
“Resistance cannot be seen, touched, heard, or smelled. But it can be felt. We experience it as an energy field radiating from a work-in-potential. It's a repelling force. It's negative. It's aim is to shove us away, distract us, prevent us from doing our work. ”

– Steven Pressfield, The War of Art
A Typical Day
The Procrastination Cycle

1. GUESS WHAT? THERE'S STUFF I HAVE TO DO!
2. ACCOMPLISH 85% OF STUFF. GOOD ENOUGH.
3. BEGIN WORKING FURIOUSLY FUELED ONLY BY SHAME AND FEAR
4. BE OVERCOME WITH GUILT FOR YOUR TOTAL LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY
5. DON'T DO ANY OF THE STUFF
6. BECOME COMPLETELY OVERWHELMED
7. HOW DO I DO THIS MUCH STUFF???
8. PANIC!
9. I'LL DO IT WHEN I'M DONE DRAWING THIS PICTURE OF A PTERODACTYL
10. NOW THERE'S MORE STUFF
11. DO ONE THING
12. GO BACK TO DRAWING DINOSAURS, LULLED INTO COMPLACENCY BY A FALSE SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT
13. NOW THERE'S EVEN MORE STUFF.
Failure to Launch

- Fatigue
- Overwhelm
- ADD/ADHD
- Mood
- Boredom/Tedious work
- Frustration
“For me, just getting started is the only hard thing. An object at rest tends to remain at rest.”

–Joel Spolsky
Momentum
Start Small
Start Small

• Make a list
• Start with something easy
• Leverage the pomodoro technique
Recommended Tool
The Pomodoro Technique
The Pomodoro Technique

- Choose any task to accomplish
- Set a timer for 25 minutes
- Hyperfocus
- When the timer rings, make a check on a piece of Paper
- Take a 5 minute Break
- Take a longer break ever 4 pomodori
Recommended Tool

Workflowy
workflowy.com

WorkFlowy

- Just tap to edit, like a normal notes app
- Zooming #awesome
  - Tap on a bullet point to zoom in on it
    - Very useful for focusing.
- Tagging
  - Tagging is #awesome for organizing and filtering your workflowy document
- And there's lots more good stuff
The Power of the Task Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>To Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Update server code to deal with new subscription type</td>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>In-Progress</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update client-code to show/hide and auto-populate fields</td>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check revision history correct</td>
<td>Dara</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check about box</td>
<td>Dara</td>
<td>Defined</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check contact support form</td>
<td>Randy</td>
<td>Defined</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deploy to test system and check login to community site</td>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Defined</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dev/test walkthrough</td>
<td>Joel</td>
<td>Defined</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual walkthrough</td>
<td>Joel</td>
<td>Defined</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technique:
Make it Work
Make it Better
Productivity Anti-Patterns
“I think a lot of new programmers like to use advanced data structures and advanced language features as a way of demonstrating their ability. I call it the lion-tamer syndrome. Such demonstrations are impressive, but unless they actually translate into real wins for the project, avoid them.”

–Jonathan Blow
Productivity Anti-Patterns

- Lion-Tamer Syndrome
- Premature Optimization
- Accepting Vague Requirements
- Unnecessary Technical Debt
Optimizing the Zone
Reduce Latency

The #1 programmer excuse for legitimately slacking off:

"My code's compiling."

Hey! Get back to work!

Compiling!

Oh, carry on.
Use the Best Tools
Create a Productive Space
Take Breaks
Productivity for Programmers

Thank You